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The Search for Synthesis in Modern Drama

Claire Larracey, '63

An era of critical redefinition of values and the means to implement and incorporate them as a vital, integral part of the changing human situation, is reflected thematically and structurally in modern drama. Contemporary theatre portrays a search for synthesis between the apparently existing polarities of human existence. The need for individuals to adapt meaningfully to current exigencies necessarily involves a search for the true, universally meaningful values in the transient, seemingly irreconcilable opposites compounded in any period of transition and change. Thus, claims of a lack of values in contemporary society can be countered by the thesis that values are always at least implicitly present but that change is occurring at the levels at which they are traditionally actualized.

Significantly in modern drama, we note a striking recurrence of the theme of a search for a frame of reference which will allow the individual to derive and maintain an ordered, pervasive set of values worthy of a total commitment of the self, which provides an intelligible synthesis of the apparent oppositions in temporal experience. The dramatist embodies this theme in one or more individuals seeking a mode of synthesis which will satisfy a universal desire for a meaningful interior life. To offset the fragmentized, transitory, and often illusory components of the existential experience, these individuals strive to reconcile the permanent and the transient; the ideal and the real; the individual and the social; and the spiritual and the material. To illustrate the modern dramatist's search for synthesis I will focus on the works of four playwrights, viz., Luigi Pirandello, exponent of the French theatre of the absurd; Henrik Ibsen, founder of modern drama; the Russian dramatist, Anton Chekhov; and the profoundly spiritual French artist, Paul Claudel, in whom I find the culmination and fulfillment of this search.

Luigi Pirandello, in *Six Characters in Search of an Author*, has presented one of the most poignantly effective illustrations of the theme of existential disillusion and search. His highly innovative techniques, coalescing to reinforce his utilization of the play-within-a-play device, emphasize his meaning and assure him of consideration as a profound artist. The theme of divergent epistemologies and inherent complications in the search for a basis of convergence, constitutes the essence of this play: "Each one of us has within him a whole world of things, each man of us his own special world. And how can we ever come to an understanding if I put in the words I utter the sense and value of things as I see them; while you who listen to me must inevitably translate them according to the conception of things each one of you has within himself. We think we understand each other but we never really do," asserts a leading character. This statement succinctly expresses the breadth and complexity of the problem.

Pirandello was markedly impressed by the implications arising from the necessary presentation of a series of social masks in the course of human interaction, a phenomenon traceable to lack of shared meanings among societal members. In behavior which is in direct contradiction to the concept of individual integrity, individuals adapt to the unintegrated fluidity of transitory situations by presenting a constantly changing self, one's social mask. The title itself, *Six Characters in Search of an Author*, provides the major clue to this theme: an author is not available to depict the interrelations of these six people because no one has a valid synthesizing vision capable of truthfully portraying his story. Thus, Pirandello shows that dramatic presentations inevitably, because of this inherent impossibility, always sacrifice individual integrity in the compromising attempt to harmonize the uniqueness of the reality peculiar to each person. Ironically, the dramatist is

unwilling to portray the incongruity arising from the divergence of epistemologies in the interests of realism, when in fact this incongruity is the most real fact of human existence.

Pirandello feels it is the responsibility of the playwright to transcend particular experience for a vision of the latent truth inherent in it. This is brought out in the important dialogue involving the stage manager, who embodies the conventionalism of the theatre which Pirandello is satirizing. It is evident, too, in the speech of the antagonist father who says: "When the characters are really alive before their author, the latter does nothing but follow them in their action, their words, in the situations which they suggest to him; and he has to will them the way they will themselves. . . . When a character is born, he acquires at once such an independence, even of his own author, that he can be imagined by everybody even in many other situations where the author never dreamed of placing him; and so he acquires for himself a meaning which the author never thought of giving him."

The problem of whether the interior life or the social life is the source of reality is not answered by *Six Characters in Search of an Author* for it fails to present the two as complementary, perceiving them rather as diametrically opposed and mutually destructive. No significant attempt is made by the characters to seek any basis for communication which will lead them to the realization that in other people one can find major sources of the meaningfulness and value of the individual life. Thus Pirandello's play reinforces the concept of life as being unintelligible and transient. The possibility of abstracting universal elements and hence, meaningful synthesis, cannot be discerned in *Six Characters in Search of an Author*.

In Ibsen's *Hedda Gabler*, we find one of the most interesting and tragic searches for a reconciliation between the idealism of the individual and the realism of the collective individuality, society, wherein the tenability of idealistic commitments, quantitatively considered, seems destroyed. Though Hedda is a character whose response to disillusionment is most difficult to sympathize with, it is nevertheless possible to discern reasons for her obsession with shattered idealism, her inability to perceive anything in social reality

that is worthy of even superficial commitment. She apparently deems her callous, opportunist, deceitful attitude as perfectly congruous with her conception of what is due society in terms of what it has ever offered her. It has failed to provide any satisfying, constructive channels for the direction of her rebellious, restless, idealistic spirit. She has, in the course of time, developed a stylized set of automatic responses for all the conventionality she encounters and she is thus unable to construct any meaning and depth from normal inter-personal relations. The Hedda whom we meet in Ibsen's play is fundamentally psychologically disturbed. For her, defense mechanisms are now functioning to the point that reality is not being perceived as it is, but rather, in terms of her automatic, stylized preconceptions. The task of evaluating Hedda becomes one of discerning her true personality which is masked by defense mechanisms. The clue to this personality lies in her obsessive dedication to the ideals of freedom, courage and spontaneous beauty. To have these ideals is not to be fundamentally callous and insensitive. Her failure as a mature integral person arises from her inability to transcend other individuals' failures to live up to her idealistic evaluation-frame. She consequently concludes that the world and its members are not worthy of the slightest exposure of her true self.

This frame of mind inevitably leads to her loss of self-knowledge. To compensate for failure to implement her own ideals during her life, Hedda tries to embody them all in her death act. This reveals her latent and fervent hope that possibly there is a "deed worth doing," that the "one right thing" is still possible. Perhaps this act could in part compensate for that which was the source of her obsessive concern: inability to implement her own values. Here is the essence of Hedda Gabler's tragedy. Endowed with rare gifts of the spirit, she utilizes them for destructive rather than constructive ends. She could not perceive in human life the potential to give and thence derive meaning from the communication of her sensitive idealism which contained such rich possibilities for synthesizing and spiritualizing the material offered by earthly interaction and existence.

Anton Chekov's *The Cherry Orchard* is a logical prelude to analysis of Paul Clandel's

dramatic work. *The Cherry Orchard* embodies the struggle between traditional and emerging values. Both new and old offer potential for good when synthesized and integrated. In the transitional period depicted, the characters are in a state of undefined identity and direction. In the midst of these people who are searching for meaning in their existence either through an uncritical desperate clinging to the past or by intense belief in nature as the ordering principle of reality, is the poet Trofimov, who is able to see in all things the progress and perfection of man when he freely and willingly accepts what is, and modifies and directs it toward good. He is able to discern the universal and consequently the meaningful, in the transitory particularities of human experience. In the dichotomy between the ideal and the real, he sees the opportunity for man to use his greatest powers. When he perceives the desperate clinging to the orchard merely because of its association with past memories, he advocates relinquishing it, breaking with the past because, in this instance, attachment to it is thwarting a form of industrial progress which will enrich human life and alleviate some of its suffering. The synthesizing value depicted in this drama is a humanistic one, a concept which is built upon and extended in Paul Claudel's verse drama.

Claudel, in *The Tidings Brought to Mary*, injects the Christian concept of grace into secular humanism. He builds upon the framework of the Incarnation and the logical fulfillment of its integrated beauty in man's Redemptive mission, in his loving, free acknowledgement that "all things that He has created are in communion, all have need of one another." This drama can be interpreted as a significant attempt to integrate Catholic doctrine with the highly compatible, but often relatively neglected, aspects of the Protestant Ethic and its directive, to remake the world in the image of God in the interests of both personal salvation and exaltation of God. Claudel implies that the world contains the forces for the spiritualization and exaltation of matter, for the implementation of meaningful Christian ideals. In this context, Claudel emphasizes man's free will, the joyful experience of choosing God freely both in response to the intrinsic goodness of God and in the interests of human fulfillment in the Christian tradition. Claudel dramatizes

the way to the fatherhood of God via active participation in the brotherhood of man and the actualization of belief in the "Christian commonwealth, without servile fear, . . . each should have his right, according to justice, in marvelous diversity, that Charity may be fulfilled."

Claudel's artistry is impressively evident in his thorough integration of poetic expression with the consistent presentation and development of his ideas of order, justice, submission, beauty, and harmony, which give philosophical as well as artistic reinforcement to his total work. The main theme of man's active participation in the Redemptive act is underscored in reference to the Cross, ". . . which draws everything to itself. . . . The heritage of all, the interior boundary stone that can never be uprooted, the centre and navel of the earth by which all humanity is held together." Pierre de Caron is the concretization of the belief in work as a form of prayer. In Claudel's opinion, there are many paths to God and man must explicitly choose one of them, for the nature of an integrated pursuit and grasp of truth is such that "one may not say that he believes in truth, but rather that it grows within him, having found nourishment."

Anne Vecours, is the most majestic figure of the drama. He is the essence of the Christian spirit of charity: a loving sharing of his lot with others, in the interests of justice, love, order, and God's glory. He constitutes Claudel's most brilliant embodiment of belief in the reality of the Incarnation and Redemption as they are impressed on men and expressed by them in their relations with their fellowmen.

The conception of hierarchical spiritual value is most effectively portrayed in the presentation of the leper, Violaine. Claudel shows how the spiritual values in human life are not only retained but in fact enriched although the flesh is being destroyed. Glowing faith in the potential of man as he lovingly and freely gives himself, in the Spirit of Christ to other men and to the will of God, are the source of some of the most beautiful poetic passages in the drama. Claudel shows that the Redemption of man via the Church's revitalization and simultaneous return to its integral simplicity is attainable through the unfathomable powerful gift of Grace, a theme which is reinforced by the consistent back-

drop of the Angelus. Perhaps the most beautiful summary of Claudel's thought can be found in the passage:

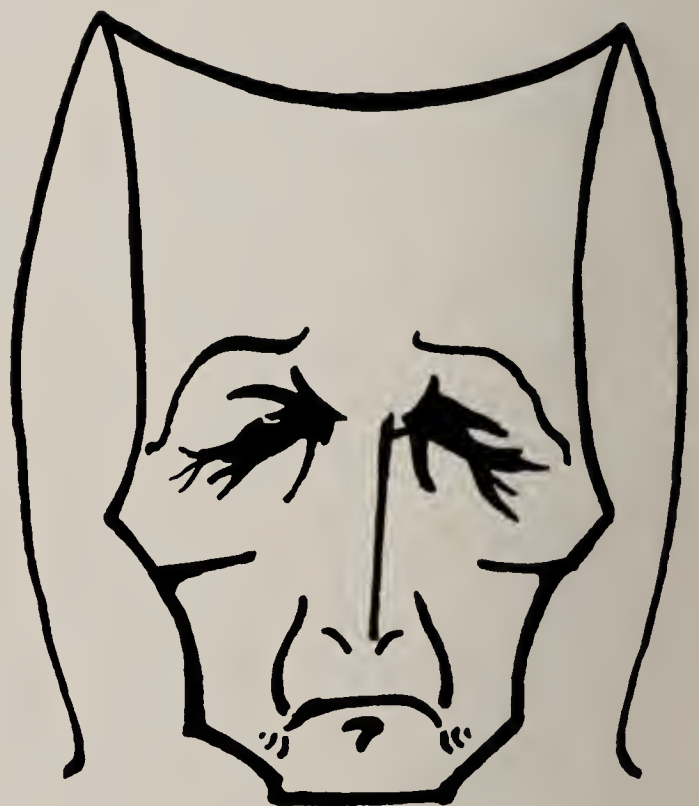
And certainly Justice is beautiful. But how much more beautiful

Is this fruitful tree of mankind, which the seed of the Eucharist engenders and makes grow.

This too makes one complete, whole unified.

Thus, justice gives way to charity, the greatest of all the virtues.

We find in Claudel's masterpiece, a fulfillment of the modern dramatists' search for synthesis. In all the previously treated dramas, the failure to arrive at this richest of all possible meanings of life constitutes the tragic overtone. By contrast, the very beauty and majesty of *The Tidings Brought to Mary*, consists in its manifestation of artistic, philosophical and theological integration.



Les Mouches: The Existential Way of Freedom

Mary Courtney, '63

And I—who do you think I am? I, too, have my image, and do you suppose it doesn't fill me with confusion? For a hundred thousand years I have been dancing a slow, dark ritual dance before men's eyes. Their eyes are so intent on me that they forget to look into themselves. If I forgot myself for a single moment, if I let their eyes turn away—

So long as there are men on earth, I am doomed to go on dancing before them.

Zeus, II, ii

Ambiguity, anguish, brutal finality and Sartre's peculiar "bad faith" saturate this piece of conversation from his early drama, *Les Mouches*, (*The Flies*). This is a representative citation from the drama, I feel, and it gives an indication of the tone, content and inspiration that give the play its meaning.

The whole play is a fair introduction to Sartrean thought, which at this date is conveniently labelled "existentialism." Although I am loathe to slight the play as drama I feel that it is of primary importance to be sensitive to the philosophical and ethical implications of the dramatic action that define Sartre's man

and his reality. Indeed, it is very difficult, and if we were to follow the general dicta of Sartre himself, undesirable, to discuss and evaluate the plot, the action, the characters, etc. . . . of a Sartrean work in the comparative light of other actions, other characters. Man makes himself by his actions, says Sartre, and hence it follows that every action of every individual is as unique as a work of art. It is not to be defined by some other action of some other individual. Thus, I feel that it will be most profitable to begin by considering Jean-Paul Sartre's philosophical position regarding man and man's relation to his world as revealed in *Les Mouches*.

Sartre's existentialism defines ambiguity as the root of man's existence: "to exist is to happen without reason." It is possible to say of human reality that, in each individual case, IT IS, but it is not possible to say WHAT IT IS. Orestes, in *Les Mouches*, does not dwell on describing the human condition as Antoine Roquentin in Sartre's novel, *La Nausée*, does: "The world absurdity is coming to life under my pen; absurdity was not an idea in my head, or the sound of a voice, only this long serpent dead at my feet. And without formulating anything clearly, I understood that I had found the key to Existence, the key to my Nausea, to my own life. In fact, all that I could grasp beyond that returns to this fundamental absurdity." Orestes comes upon it in a moment of self-intuition, "What emptiness! What endless emptiness, as far as eye can reach!" There is no possible dialogue between man and his posited existence, hence after his acceptance of absurdity as a fact (but not as a norm), Orestes strives to give himself an essence from within himself through an ethical statement since it is not given by any universal order. Even though Sartre emphasizes the preeminence of the individual, he realizes that human reality includes not only our subjectivity but also ourselves as objects existing, and it is through the other person that we are faced with the necessity of passing judgment upon ourselves. Orestes, in order to belong to the country of his birth, to be accepted by the people of Argos, "for memories are luxuries reserved for people who own houses, cattle, fields, and servants," must assume roles which others have posited for him by their expectations. He must have a status in order to act.

In an effort to describe the fundamental

irreducible that is man, Sartre naturally comes face to face with a concept that is now so traditional that He feels that it reflects permanent and basic aspects of the human condition, that is the concept of God. He completely rejects a Christian concept of God. For him, consciousness acts by negation and to be conscious is to be aware of nothingness. God would be complete consciousness. A union of being with lack of being is absurd and impossible. The infantile dependence upon an anthropomorphic picture of God prevents man from realizing his ability to deal directly with the realities that face him. In *Les Mouches*, Zeus is the ally of a tyrant who fears the freedom of his subjects and turns their interest away from the facts of their existence to mythological duties that are reinforced by conditioned guilt projections. And at the same time Zeus' one gnawing, secret fear is that Orestes knows that he is free, free to choose his own actions. He confides to Aegisthus: "Once freedom lights its beacon in man's heart, the gods are powerless against him. It's a matter between man and man, and it is for other men, and for them only, to let him go his gait, or to throttle him." Religion, for Sartre, is a form of "bad faith" which the authentic individual cannot espouse. It is a form of escapism from the reality of the absurd.

This notion of freedom is basic to Sartre's concept that human action creates an essence for the individual. He says that freedom of action is that irreducible which distinguishes man from the rest of the world. The nobility of Orestes comes through poignantly in his acceptance of the consequences of freedom: "I have done *my* deed, Electra, the heavier it is to carry, the more pleased I'll be; for that burden is my freedom. Only yesterday I walked the earth haphazard; thousands of roads I tramped that brought me nowhere, for they were other men's roads. Today I have one path only, and heaven knows where it leads. But it is *my* path." The falsely spiritual tutor counsels Orestes with the security of neutrality and noncommitment: "You are free to turn your hand to anything. But you know better than to commit yourself. . . ." And Electra is weak in denying reality to the dream that would truly express herself, the murder of her mother: "Of course I deny it. Wait! Well, perhaps in a way. . . . Oh, I don't know. I dreamt the crime, but you

carried it out, you murdered your own mother."

As a philosophical concept projected into an ethical frame of reference (as it inevitably must be since this is undeniably a philosophy not of speculation but of action), human freedom means that "... in the bright realm of human values we have no excuse behind us, nor justification before us" (Sartre, *L'Être et le Néant*). Universally valid moral absolutes do not exist. There is no transcendent self or transcendent deity to whom we can look for directives; our transcendence is a function of our present choices which are freely made. Orestes defies the prerogative of the gods to determine *a priori* the rightness of an action. He confronts Zeus after the double murder with a resolute declaration: "I am no criminal, and you have no power to make me atone for an act I don't regard as a crime." Sartre's authentic individual, in an isolation imposed upon him by his freedom, and in response to the requirements of his unique situation, must make his moral choices and bear the responsibility for them. Once a man has become self-conscious he is morally obliged to act in no way that will deaden his preoccupation with his integrity. He is obliged to impregnate all of his actions with some sense of their relevance to him. This notion of authenticity, followed to its logical conclusion, would require that the individual do unto others as he would have them do unto him. While there are no universal objective norms, once he adopts a norm for himself, he wills it to be of universal validity. Orestes having discovered his human reality, wants Electra to act according to her awareness. He tells Zeus, "... her suffering comes from within, and only she can rid herself of it. For she is free." And he desperately wants his insight to penetrate into her consciousness. Answering her query as to where they would go if they left Argos, Orestes gently tells her: "I don't know. Towards ourselves. Beyond the rivers and mountains are an Orestes and an Electra waiting for us, and we must make our patient way towards them." Here we have the dramatization of the uncertainty, of the agonies, that inhere in the search for the spiritually valid self that Orestes has found worth suffering for.

Orestes is an example of the ethical individual who must assume responsibility for his society and work for its improvement. In

a heated debate with Zeus he rallies: "What do I care for Zeus? Justice is a matter between men, and I need no god to teach me it. It is right to restore to the people of Argos their sense of human dignity." Sartre implies that the individual is most likely to move towards integration of his personality and the progressive realization of his goals if he has a rational understanding of the human condition. Orestes is supposed to be the instrument of emancipation to free Argos from "the good old piety of yore, rooted in terror."

Les Mouches dramatizes Orestes' growth from his initially frivolous freedom to the intense, terrifying metaphysical freedom of the moment when he passionately claims his action in front of the masses of Argos: "You see me, men of Argos, you understand that my crime is wholly mine; I claim it as my own, for all to know; it is my glory, my life's work, and you can neither punish me nor pity me." Sartre's use of the terms "my act, . . . my own, . . . my crime" emphasizes the reciprocal bond between man and what he does. *Les Mouches* might be called a "metaphor that purports to show man that responsibility is not synonymous with guilt and that the world of men is made up only of the impact of actions, whose meaning comes only from the men who have committed them or suffered them" (Thody, *Jean-Paul Sartre*). Orestes' stature as a hero comes from his acceptance of the crushing responsibility of giving the world a meaning that comes from himself alone. As he begins his dramatic rise to heroic magnitude he announces his decision to act to Electra: "I'm still too light, I must take a burden on my shoulders, a load of guilt so heavy as to drag me down, right down into the abyss of Argos."

The bare action, without dwelling upon its metaphysical overtones, is acutely reminiscent of pure classical intensity and seriousness. Man's total being is engagé; he is lending all of his energy to surviving a crisis. Orestes is confronted with the question of what he is. His drama consists in his suspension between possible definitions of his being. He says: "I wander from city to city, a stranger to all others and to myself. . . . The solid passions of the living were never mine. . . . I want to be a man who belongs to some place." One can notice the contrast between the collective spectacle of the people of Argos, where things and individuals must sacrifice their sponta-

neity and freedom defined as part of a whole, and Orestes who stands out at the height of the action as an individual who answers for his own thoughts, fears and acts.

Precise discussion of either the philosophical theories or the ethical postulates of Jean-Paul Sartre tends to vagueness and often to redundancy because his intensity of mission does not seem proportional to his logical consistency. I have limited myself to a discussion of the objective meaning projected from *Les Mouches*. I have tried to see what he says rather than whether or not what he says is logically or experientially valid. And I think that there is no doubt but that Sartre is the professional philosopher *par excellence* in this drama. Any questions that would ordinarily be limited to the drama as literature are not fully explained unless through an examination of his position as a philosopher utilizing the propaganda potential of the theater. For instance, why did Sartre use the Orestean myth when he was so concerned with the condition of modern man? Besides its universal psychic referent, I think that his principal reason for using the myth was because its traditional insistence on the theme of fatality allowed him by contrast to bring out his own ideas of liberty and individual responsibility. Secondly, it provides him with a sufficiently horrible action that would not have to run the gauntlet of an incredulous audience before it was accepted as the simple fact that it must be. "Perhaps the religious implications were convenient parallels to his critical disapproval of the Vichy regime and the Catholic Church in World War II France" (Thody, *Jean-Paul Sartre*).

But what distinguishes Sartre's drama from a purely philosophical work is the dramatic and concrete nature of the philosophy itself. The fundamental problem of the definition of man and his existence *sur la terre* is truly embodied in living action, in dynamic engagement. *Les Mouches* first presents to the spectator a seemingly familiar plot structure. From there, Sartre leads on from a universe of perception, common sense and psychological habits to an existential conclusion, sometimes difficult in its newness. This is evident in Orestes' words: "Farewell, my people, try to reshape your lives. All here is new, all must begin anew. And for me too, a new life is beginning. A strange life. . . ." The progression leading to the statement of this

new reality makes up the greater part of the play. Jacques Guicharnaud feels that Sartre's use of the naturalistic technique supports his reason for using mythology as a plot basis. If this is a fact I think that it is possible to class him with the phenomenologists who wish to bring the audience directly to the "case" and to expose gradually the existential attitude within this naturalism.

The concept of drama as ritual that would bind *Les Mouches* to its Greek original is virtually absent. This is philosophy in dead earnest, an often uninterrupted flow of ideas that suffers from the lack of ironic relief that Giradoux in *La Guerre de Troie* and Camus in *Caligula* sprinkle through their plays. It is obvious throughout that Sartre is the writer committed to informing man about his human condition. His characters make speeches far too long, emphasizing the differences from the original legend. The ruthlessly clear language stops short of no horror. Zeus describes the inhabitants of Argos to Orestes: "See that old creature over there, creeping away like a beetle on her little black feet, and hugging the walls. Well, she's a good specimen of the squat black vermin that teem in every cranny of this town."

The symbolism of the play is overt, sometimes inartistic, repetitious to the point of redundancy. One of the basic motifs, the desire for self-realization, is stated all too often. Nevertheless, *Les Mouches* is a moving drama because of the force and immediacy of the author's determination to free man so that he can be human. Although the tragic tension is dissolved with the murder of the royal pair, the play becomes subsequently rather more than less problematic. It is then that Orestes has to prove himself heroic in owning up to his action. But if we want to go beyond Sartre's words in the mouth of Orestes we can validly say that his crime does not really commit him to anything concrete and hence he is a less forceful dramatic example of the existential man that Sartre would have us imitate. The final scene is too facile for reality's sake. Orestes seems to feel that he has saved Argos and substantially freed the people simply by setting them an aristocratic example. Sartre seems not to consider the real relation of a man or a group of men to religion or their traditional commitment to an external superior force. He perhaps justifiably attacks the absurdities of decadent fanaticism

and determinism, but his initial disregard for the more profound realities of the religious experience take away from the dramatically comprehensible impact of his thesis. Even in his liberating act, Orestes remains alone. His remoteness always seems to prevent him from coming to grips with the viscosity of reality that Sartre so effectively symbolizes with his spiders and flies. Electra in her over-excited humanity is philosophically vocal but rarely dramatically eloquent.

It is no doubt the exaggeration of the philosophical that limits the dramatic. Aegisthus and Clytemnestra are the petrified counterparts of the passions of Orestes and Electra. They are eternal prisoners of their deed of murder. Nevertheless, this drama is exciting because it has a peculiar tangibility for a modern audience. Its transcendence is not of the Shakespearean or Sophoclean magnitude,

but it realizes the immanence of man, of man in the world, and the collectivity of men. It presents man with the challenge to push through the rigid limitation of exhausted forms to new existence and freedom.

"Man is free, he makes his decision in isolation and anguish, and no one but he can be held responsible for it. Even if God did exist, no ethical principles could be deduced from His existence, for the liberty of man makes him quite independent of the God who created him." (Greene, *The Existential Ethic*) Apropos of this ethic of freedom we listen to Orestes' confrontation of Zeus:

*What is there between thee and me?
We shall pass by each other without
touching, like two ships which pass in the
night. Thou art a God and I am free; we
are equally alone, and we both feel the
same anguish.*

Valedictory

—Everyone is created a specific piece in this game,
but the beauty of being a pawn is
that if you make it across the board
you can be what you choose—
and the beauty of being anything else is evident.

You have to listen very closely, though,
because the players aren't allowed to shout
or use their hands to push you where they will.
You train yourself to listen very closely.

A good thing is to watch the other pieces;
if you can figure out how each one moves
it's easier to see what you are doing,
both in relation to the other pieces
and in the tall intentions of the players;
always remember you are pawn, not player.

Though sometimes you regret to leave a square,
the hardest thing—more trying than the pieces
who never move or listen—is to lose
the nobler pieces to the other side,
and still to have to journey on alone.

—Come to attention now, and fare thee well.

Kathleen Marotta, '64

Bouquet for a Crazy Lady

Jeanne E. Paradis, '64

"Eec-ow-kec!" That was Dee calling her in their private code. Emily stuffed the last few bites of peanut butter sandwich into her mouth. Her mother was still on the phone so she dumped the rest of her milk down the sink and ran out the back door.

It was white and hot in the sun except for a red towel on the clothesline. The porch burned comfortably beneath her bare feet and sent heat waves simmering up her legs. She was glad it was summer and that she didn't have to wear shoes.

Dee was drawing faces in the dirt at the bottom step, and there, leaning on the stair rail, was Giorgianna Le Brun, her red hair sticking out all over the place.

"Oh, hi Giorgianna, when did *you* get here?"

Giorgianna looked her up and down and she suddenly became aware of the jelly stain on her jersey.

"Well, hello Emmy. I got here yesterday only Granny took me and Billy over to Paragon Park so I didn't come over 'til today."

She hated to be called Emmy and Giorgianna knew it.

They had to stand around in the yard awhile since they couldn't decide what to do; at least Giorgianna couldn't. She couldn't go swimming because granny wouldn't let her swim in the harbor. She didn't want to go minnowing 'cause young ladies didn't run around the mud flats catching dirty old fish that died the next day (she was probably afraid she'd get her fancy sunsuit messed



up). She wouldn't go out in the woods behind Aunty Rita's by the magic pool and play fairyland. That was for babies and *she* was almost nine.

Dee agreed to everything—even about the minnowing. She watched every move Giorgianna made.

Emily stood on one foot and then the other, curling her toes happily in the warm grass. She was going to suggest hunting snakes under the stone wall when she caught Giorgianna watching her pick a scab on her knee.

"Emily, what *are* you doing?"

Guiltily Emily rubbed away the bubble of bright red that was beginning to spread and pretended to be interested in the stain on her shirt. "Nuthin'," she replied in innocence.

"Really Emmy, you are the *weirdest* child!" Giorgianna made a disgusted face.

Dee made one too, and then pretended the sight of blood made her sick. She began to sway and moan, holding her stomach as though she was gonna throw-up any minute. Dee liked to pretend things.

Giorgianna looked kind of worried so Emily said, "Pooh! She isn't going to die! Why just yesterday we played pirates on the lobster

crate down the beach and she had her hand cut *clear* off and didn't say a word!" She sniffed like her mother did when she didn't believe something. "'Sides, it's stopped bleeding. Let's *do* something 'stead of standing around all day."

"I know what we *could* do only I s'pose you kids wouldn't dare," said Giorgianna.

Dee was sure right away that she dared do anything Giorgianna did. "Yes we would, Giorgianna. Come on, tell us."

"Yeah, come on, tell us," Emily teased.

"Well, all right, only you have to never tell anyone 'cause it's a secret. On your honor?"

"Cross our hearts!"

"Well, if you'll never tell—there's a crazy lady in Granny's house and—"

"A real crazy lady?" Dee was ready to believe anything.

"Aw cut it out Giorgianna. We know crazy people are put in nut houses."

"Yes there is. She thinks I'm her mother and she's real old. If I go in the room she talks to me like I'm her mother. You kids're just scared to go. I knew you wouldn't dare."

"Oh, I'm not scared," said Dee, but her voice was kinda small and funny. "I'm not afraid of an old crazy lady."

"I'm not scared either," Emily asserted, though she was. She had never seen a real crazy lady but it sure didn't sound like much fun. She didn't want to go but she didn't want the other kids to know she was scared.

"Well then, let's go—only you kids just better not tell *anyone* or we'll get into trouble." Then, before they went over to her grandmother's house, Giorgianna made them take an oath never to let anyone know.

I wish I finished my milk, Emily thought as she followed the other two down the road.

It was cool walking under the big trees. Emily tried to step in a sunspot at every step. At the turn in the road they cut across Conley's field to the swamp. The swamp grass was hard and yellow.

When they reached the line of the silvery willows they left the swamp and entered the woods. It wasn't a very big woods but it was the best around. Right in the middle grew a huge hill of honeysuckle vines. Everyone called it the "Jouncies" because it was the best place ever to jump up and down on. They stopped for awhile to play. It was

the best fun in the summer when the flowers sent up great clouds of sweet smell before they died. It almost made Emily dizzy. She was sorry to kill the flowers but she liked to jounce.

Before long, though, Giorgianna got tired of playing because she wanted to hurry up and show them the crazy lady. Dee followed quickly but she didn't look like she really wanted to. Emily hung back to pick some honeysuckle but the others kept calling her. She left reluctantly.

Giorgianna and Dee walked along the stone wall while Emily added some dog-tooth violets to her bouquet. She stepped on a head of skunk cabbage. It sure smelled terrible. She wrinkled her nose.

They took a short cut through the orchard. First they looked to make sure that old witch, Mrs. Crane, wasn't around. Just on the other side was Giorgianna's granny's house.

It was very quiet, almost haunted-looking, the way the windows stared black out of the white walls. They didn't talk much going up the driveway and into the kitchen. Emily closed the door softly behind her. She looked at Dee. Her face was a yellowish color. She didn't look very daring now. She looked like she really was going to be sick.

Emily clutched her bouquet tighter and held it stiffly in front of her. They had begun to wilt but the sweet honeysuckle smell wafted up to her. From somewhere in the house came a murmur, soft and incessant.

Giorgianna led the way down a cold, dark hall and up a steep stairway. Dee tagged close behind her. Emily was scared. The murmur grew to a low mumble.

"Here she is!" Giorgianna smiled proudly.

The other two girls followed her into the room. It was very dark. The green sickroom shades were pulled all the way down. From a corner came a mumble, rising and falling from the white bedspread.

"Ma-ma—mama, mama!" came a sudden scream from the bed. Dee jumped back suddenly and bumped right into Emily.

Giorgianna laughed and walked up to the bed. "I'm not your mother!" she sounded ugly. "Whatsa matter with you kids? You scared?" she pulled Dee over by the arm. "Well, come on!"

"Ma-mama. Come—come." She sounded like she was crying. "Mama! Please!"

Something moved at the pit of Emily's

stomach. The other two laughed. She didn't think it sounded funny—it hurt her somehow.

"Quiet you old hag! Don't you even know your own mother?" Giorgianna laughed at her. Then she put out her hand and pulled at the bedsheet. "You're crazy, old lady."

"Yeah," Dee said, "and you don't talk right. You're crazy." And she giggled.

Emily stumbled over to the bed. She felt all alone in the whole world. She looked right into the old lady's face. It was skinny, with wrinkles, and real, real old. If it weren't for her eyes she would be dead. Her little black eyes just stared and stared and didn't see anything. They were cold. Emily shivered.

Suddenly the old lady stretched out her hand and grasped for Emily. "Mama!" she cried, "Please."

Emily jumped back. Something caught in her throat so she could hardly breathe.

The other kids thought that was real funny.

But the old lady didn't seem to understand. She didn't try to hurt anyone. Emily looked at her for a long time. She didn't think it was very funny.

"Say Emmy, why don't ya give your flowers to the crazy lady, huh? Wouldn't that be cute? Emmy giving flowers to a crazy lady!" She

could hardly say anything more she was laughing so hard.

"Yeah, Emmy, why don't ya? Whatsa matter? You afraid of her or something?" And Dee shrieked with laughter.

She hated them! Hated them all; Giorgianna, Dee and the helpless old crazy lady. They were horrible. She turned and stared at them—the worst look—until they stopped laughing. They were surprised. They were scared now. Then she threw her bouquet at them, hard as she could. A piece of honeysuckle stuck in Giorgianna's hair. A violet fell on the spread. The old lady's hand plucked at it; pulled it to pieces until it wasn't a flower anymore.

Then Emily ran. Down the dark, narrow stairs and through the quiet house. Her bare feet slapped hollowly on the cold linoleum of the kitchen floor. She was halfway down the driveway before the screen door slammed, shattering the dozing afternoon.

Echoing and re-echoing her footsteps followed her as she stumbled through the orchard. She had to get away from the black unseeing eyes, the age-cracked face, the ugly laughing—most of all the laughing.

As she ran she noticed the cut on her knee bleeding again. She began to cry.

I'D RATHER BE ALONE IN SNOW

I'd rather be alone in snow
Than with you near
Eyes shut in so by shaded fear
Of night falling in flakes of light.

I hear your soul unseeing
Echo, shattering descending silence.
My soul aches soft . . . then,
 hushed so
I'd rather be alone in snow.

Winifred Welch, '64



THE CHASE

Ann L. White, '64

Skinner started up as the hard morning light struck at him. He had to start running again. Keep going, don't stop, don't look back—those were the rules. He didn't even have to think about them anymore. But his chest was hurting him. It wanted him to stop. It wanted to make him stop and get caught. He was strong though, and he wasn't going to give in. Skinner tensed his mind so that the pain couldn't get inside and make him weak. He ran on.

They couldn't be far behind him now. He had heard them in the distance the other night and today they were much closer.

I've never seen you, but I know you, Skinner told them in his mind. You're dark and tall and strong; your faces are ugly with a three days beard like mine. Oh yes, I know

you—you efficient men who hunt human beings down like animals. You use dogs to follow the scent—and you have no right!

Skinner wanted to stop for just a minute, to turn around and scream at them, "I'm a man! I'm running, but I'm a man!"

He couldn't do it though. That's what they wanted—for him to stop and give them a chance to catch up.

But there was another way of telling them; he knew what to do. Deliberately now, but without slowing down, Skinner drove his feet into the ground, digging down hard with the toe of his shoe. They could follow his track, but they would have to look at it. And when they did, they would see it was the footprint of a man and not an animal.

"I run because I want to run. I'm willing it!

I'm willing it!" His words became a part of the steady rhythm of his footsteps thudding on the frozen ground.

But what was he running for? He kept forgetting. He had done . . . something wrong. That was it. He had killed someone. He was a killer. That's why he had to run. He had killed one, two . . . no, seven men. But it wasn't his fault. He hadn't even wanted to kill that first time. He had done it then to save himself. Kill or be killed, that was another rule. He had no choice. But when it was over, he remembered the fierce joy he had felt as his hands squeezed and squeezed, as he struggled with the force of a man's life and had beaten it with his own strength. This was why he had killed again and again. He had to do it, he wasn't responsible. He needed to feel this power. And the need kept coming back, driving him on, beating at him incessantly until he grappled with warm human flesh again and squeezed it until it no longer defied him.

But now he was being hunted, and his strong arms and hands just hung from his shoulders, dragging him down, holding him back. If only he could get rid of them! If he flung them down behind him, maybe they'd

be satisfied. After all, his hands had done it, not him. "If thy hand scandalize thee, cut it off." Wasn't something like that right in the Bible? Christ or somebody had said it. That's what he would do—tear off his hands and throw them to the men with the dogs. Then he would be free. His hands were the beasts; he was a man. Let them take his hands before a jury; let them try his hands for murder. He himself would testify against them. "I'll go to the witness stand and point my finger at them and . . ." Skinner laughed out loud. He would point his finger . . . at his hands. Oh that was funny, really funny. He thought he'd die laughing.

The young police lieutenant felt sick. Joe had killed him with the first shot. Right through the back of the head. Joe always was a good shot. "So that's Skinner," he said to himself, but Joe heard him.

"Look kid, don't feel sorry for him. He shoulda got a lot worse. He was no more than an animal—a stinking, murdering animal. So forget the great humanitarian bit."

The lieutenant looked down again at Skinner's shriveled body. Just an animal . . . but what had he been laughing about?



A GROWING TIME

Barbara Lissandri, '64

Riekey heard the front door open. He waited. Nothing. His mother was evidently taking off her hat and coat in the hall. She walked into the living room and passed on through it to the kitchen.

Riekey swallowed hard. Then, "Hiya, Mom."

"Oh," Mrs. De Felice remembered with a start that she had a son. "Hello, son."

Son. He wondered why she called him son now. She never used to. He stirred uneasily, then he let "The Hardy Boys" engulf him completely again.

"Riekey, come wash your hands. Supper's almost ready." His mother's voice was crisp.

Riekey lingered. The fire was warm and he liked losing himself in "The Hardy Boys."

"Riekey, damn it, get out here and wash your hands before I come in and make you wish you had."

"Damn." "Hell." Why his mother used those words all of a sudden was a mystery to him. He abandoned his book and ran to the kitchen.

"Ouch, mama mia!"

"Gee, I'm sorry, Auntie Sylvia!"

"For heaven's sakes, what's the matter with you? Are you trying to break your aunt's leg? That's all I'd need!" Mrs. De Felice's voice was raspy, tired, grating.

Riekey walked carefully over to the sink. His aunt was rubbing her twisted leg where the mark of his heel was. He crumpled up inside. As it was, life was hard enough for his crippled aunt, he realized, and now he had just made it harder.

He stood at the sink and wished fervently that his mother would lift him to the faucet. He was still too short to reach it comfortably, so he and his mother had a nightly ritual constructed around the washing of his hands. She would boost him to the faucet, affectionately pat his behind, and murmur, "Are you ever going to grow, caro mio?" Their ritual had not taken place for some days now.

Supper was a silent affair, heavy and

oppressive. It used to be gay and comfortable, but that was when his father was there.

"Everything'll be O.K. when Dad gets back," he assured himself. "Mom'll be able to stay home instead of having to run the store and then Auntie Syl won't have to do everything around the house." He dropped the greasy chicken wing he was twiddling.

"I see you've still got your school pants on," Mrs. De Felice snapped.

"I'll go change them," he whimpered.

"You can sit there now. The harm's done. As if I haven't enough to do without worrying about your clothes, too. And will you please lean forward when you eat?"

He stretched his fork into the salad bowl. Mrs. De Felice had been trying to break him of the habit of regarding the salad bowl as his own private property, and now she hissed through clenched teeth, "Take it out on your own dish. Are you a human being, or an animal?"

Riekey withdrew his hand quickly, nervously, and in a hurry he upset the milk bottle.

"Damn it all, leave the table, will you, and don't come back until you learn some manners. I don't know what kind of a tramp I've brought you up to be."

Riekey slid out of his seat willingly. He seized the opportunity of escaping the heavy atmosphere in the kitchen.

"Maybe Dad said he would call and he hasn't," he reasoned to himself. "But gee whiz, with Nanna so sick. Mom should realize that he hasn't got time. He didn't even have time to say good-bye to me," he remembered ruefully.

Riekey had never seen his grandmother. Chicago was too many dollars away from Stamford, Connecticut. The call that Nanna De Felice was seriously ill had come in the middle of the night, and Mr. De Felice had left hastily.

Riekey stood on tiptoes to get his jacket out of the hall closet. His mother's coat hung

haphazardly from the chair in front of the telephone table; her hat was perched on top of the telephone. Ricky was puzzled for a moment; he knew his mother to be a meticulous woman.

He shrugged, zipped his jacket, and went outside. It was cold. He sat on the front steps and drew his knees up to his chest to keep warm.

"Hiya, Rick."

"Hi, Steve."

"Doin' anything?"

"Nope."

"Wanna game of checkers?"

"O.K."

Ricky plodded across the street beside Steve. The McGillicuddy home was well-lighted. Ricky settled himself on the front porch while Steve disappeared in search of the checkers. Mr. and Mrs. McGillicuddy were in the parlor, and Ricky could hear snatches of their conversation when they raised their voices. Mrs. McGillicuddy seemed to be doing most of the talking.

"The poor woman . . . to do with the boy?"

"My father says you should come in out of the cold. We can play in the kitchen." Steve popped his head out the door long enough to deliver his message, then waited inside for Ricky. They had to pass through the parlor on their way to the kitchen.

"Rick, m' boy, how are you?" Mr. McGillicuddy had a booming voice. Ricky somehow felt at home. He had never been inside the McGillicuddy house before.

"Fine, thank you, Mr. McGillicuddy," he replied, awkwardly shifting from one foot to the other.

"Gonna beat the hell out of Steve tonight?" Mr. McGillicuddy continued in a friendly tone.

"Gonna try darn hard!" Ricky said emphatically, with a bit more self-assurance.

"Good for you, boy! I might come out and watch later."

The kitchen was bright and warm. Ricky and Steve commenced their game, punctuated every now and then by monosyllabic conversation.

"What is she going to do all by herself?" Mrs. McGillicuddy had picked up the thread of her talk interrupted by the boys' arrival.

Ricky wondered why Steve had asked him to play. The two boys didn't know each other that well.

"Heard from your father yet?" Steve inquired.

"Nope." Then, "He's probably got a lot on his mind."

"Well. I wouldn't worry if I were you. He's bound to call sooner or later."

"What do you mean, 'sooner or later?'" Ricky wondered irritably. "He'll be home just as soon as everything's O.K. with Nanna. And if she dies, he'll be home after the funeral. . . ."

"And how are the two champions doing?" Mr. McGillicuddy was making good his promise to observe the game. "Rick, m' boy, I thought you'd have it all sewn up by now." He slapped Ricky affectionately on the back and pulled up a chair. The game was livelier now with Mr. McGillicuddy there.

"Isn't this nice," Mrs. McGillicuddy came in the kitchen beaming. "I'll make some hot chocolate and we can have a party. Ricky, you're our son for tonight. And any time you want to come over, dear, don't hesitate. Any friend of Steve's is a friend of ours. Isn't that right, Dad?"

The poor woman—all by herself. . . . I wouldn't worry. He'll call sooner or later. . . . You're our son for tonight. . . . Come over anytime. Right, Dad? The bits and snatches he had heard that night raced through Ricky's head and all of a sudden made sense.

He knew now that his father wasn't in Chicago at his Nanna's; he had never been there. No one knew where he was; no one knew if he was coming back, least of all his mother.

His mother—right now she'd probably be in the kitchen, mending the rip in the knee of his only other good pair of pants.

"Mom!" his anguished cry was out of place in the gay McGillicuddy kitchen.

"Now wait a minute, son." Mr. McGillicuddy realized his plight and went to console him, but Ricky was too quick.

Through the living room, out the door, down the steps, across the street—he covered the short distance between the two houses in seconds, but it seemed to him as if he had shackles on his feet. Finally he reached the front door. He flung it wide, and crying out, "Ma, Ma!" he raced to the kitchen. His mother had flung the pants on the table and was running to meet him.

Q
U
A
R
R
Y

Joyce Hallisey, '63

I was small.
At the sound of wax
Spluttering with fierce church intensity
I started up the aisle—running.
Between the pillar and the steps
I made an infinite motion—checked
only by the wood door
Weighing slow as it turned
onto snow,
Trackless to the valley rim.

Something heaved in that hard run
hushing as I turned then—
Played statues with me. That night
I brought home fists of snow. . .
pelted the tree beside the house—
Once
 made
 a near miss.

I lay holy still. Bed was cold.
I was a dead lady (hands so)
While faces blinked in the pink light
Into faces, flowers, at me.
My stiff smile stopped, ten o'clock.
Tea cups under looks rim the room with dust.
If someone polite would break the ice
And pour. . . .

All substance shriveled but the snow.
Packed in painless in a night's fall
It had filled the hollow—
hiding house-brown spots . . .
fuzzed a grey scratch of trees.
The sheared hill would have made precarious
Donkey travel. Something (I was sure)
A flower that slipped from his ear
when the small beast shivered
Had poked the snow. I had all hours to
 dinner
For scaring up
Humps of dried leaves.
Dead birds I found
layered in the cold
Pulled against a gloss that muffled meaning.

At the door turning
I almost . . .
Poked—curious—
That pink mass of rabbit
Hung
Thin legs
Tied to the rain spout.
How early were they out
to give him that third eye?

If I had been with them
I would have said yes simple
and touched
that great gap
Dropping
 away under my hand.
Standing here after Easter death
I can't admit a circle.
This kill means Christmas—
Company.
The rest's
a paper scissors' trick. The eye
is crayoned.

Christ was coming—
Came
with ealender quickness crossed out—
in a rush of air under the door—
Rubbed glass ehinks.

The rabbit was gone—a perfect time.
Fed-quiet, company perched out on stiff
 chairs.
I met Him then . . . light-prodded . . .
marvelous in wood.

Following a donkey way
I rode heavy into orange weather.
Splinters of a blue town beneath
Shook Him out in relief.
Christ pieced . . . made Christ and more.
I could have slipped Him into a sock then
or elosed a box and had . . . a berry taste.
There was something there for sifting.

 This rabbit sprouts perennial
 at the edge of Easter.
 Turning his ears he waits
 Then folds
 neat
 through a narrow door.
The still-shivering grass seemed proof enough.
Was he real?

For the skilled, Christ pulls out easy.
A subtefuge of palm
Drew Him into town.
They got Him in the end
on a kiss.

There's something to be said for Judas' motion
Sprung pillar to steps along a silver coil.
He went . . . far . . .
 in the dark
As if he had been going a long time

Sensing sly in the wood
and in a raw jerk of rope
around his neck
Some prize.
How could he have known
From the beginning the term
Hung dark sweet in the balance?
Or was the last aet something
different . . .

Only a cancelling out?
Even Judas yes—
Knew his mind I think.

I wanted Him . . . kept ahead—
Not that faee-close aeross at Supper.
The gaze (too steady)
Silver-backed a question
Confirming my first motion slow
As part of a small pantomime
in the snow.

The glass men sat
Wrought in plaee against the eold.
I started up the aisle past blotched light
Running.

Stepping
baek
to feel something of myself
in this winter place with the rabbit
Dangling,
I hear them comment,
“This supple Christ
Pins poor . . .
Pulls holes.”

Still they poke
to find out God in Him . . .

This Christ? or some
Broken doll old- Christmas?
He was rabbit-real, left tracks
At the edge of Easter.

It's dark now as they break him off—
Dead icicle.
Someone's switched cups at tea.
The plates were counted out
Before I came. No room,
the rabbit said.
If I've been tricked . . .
I'll back out . . .
like Alice.

What's in a Name?

Christine Wroblewski, '65

I read a very interesting article in the paper today: more than fifty percent of the people in this country wish they could change their names. To these people I say—go to it! But choose your alias carefully. Look what the distinctive “Machine-gun” did for Mr. Kelly. “Legs” Diamond didn’t do too badly either.

But, don’t think aliases belong only to criminals. My family, which hasn’t had an arrest in the last five weeks, is rife with aliases. I am a prime example. No one but my parents and my grandmother knows that my name is really Krystyna. It was concealed so well that even I didn’t know that was my name until I was sixteen.

My brother’s problem is a little different. The priest baptized him John Robert. My parents call him Francis Bernard. He insists his name is Frank, when he’s not calling himself Matthew or Matt, or being called Ski by his friends.

I was seventeen before I found out what my mother’s real name is. Since my tenderest years I had blindly trusted that that dear woman’s name was Kay. At sixteen I met a man who asked: “You’re Charlotte’s daughter, aren’t you?” I, of course, avowed I was *not* Charlotte’s daughter. But, alas, I was. Then, it took me another year to discover Charlotte is an alias for Casmiera. But I can’t blame Mom. After all, *her* mother hasn’t used her real name in years.

My mother’s talent rubbed off on her godchild and namesake. Miss Charlotte Skiba would be unknown to ninety percent of her friends. But mention Shirley—or worse yet, Yoie or Skib—and immediately she is recognized. (I’m still trying to figure out how “Yoie” got in there).

The “W” in my father’s name isn’t technically an alias, but I still haven’t found out what it represents. However, what my father lacks, my uncle makes up. He was elected mayor under the name Anthony Balicki. The only trouble is, it isn’t his name by even the wildest stretch of the imagination. It’s Chub. I ought to know; I’ve called him that since I could talk.

Aunt Jule doesn’t even have a Jule, Julia, Julie, Julianna or anything beginning with a “J” in her legal moniker. Her name is Praxedes. That fact didn’t stop me, though. For years she was “Ant Choo.” My tongue never unwound enough to wrap around Praxedes so she’s still Jule, even though she isn’t.

The grand prize winner, in my estimation, is my Aunt Claire. Why this woman’s picture isn’t hanging in the post office I will never know. Her driver’s license carries the name Claire Balicki. Her checking account is made out to a Lodja B. Blaszkiewicz. She signs receipts with Clara, using whichever last name strikes her fancy that day. Her church envelopes attest to the generosity of a Balbina Balicki. I’ve seen her birth certificate. You guessed it—Leokadya Balbina Blaszkiewicz. O.K. Let’s see someone beat that one!



Tell Me

*"Tell me
about the fairies."*

"There isn't much to say—do you mean
where they live
and all?"

"Everything."

"Some things, you know,
fairies don't like
to have told. . . ."

*"Do they eat cereal for breakfast
and sandwiches for lunch?"*

"Not exactly.
Sit up here, beside me . . . that's it;
In summer months, and
toward the early fall,
fairies make their nests
in tops
of down-soft
thistles.

They hide there in rose-green thorn-bush castles
where no one sees
or hears them until
you, or I,
pick off a stem
and blow them
high—to—heaven,
send them
riding
on the drafts
Away from fortresses and moats."

*"Do we ever know
Where they come down?"*

*"We never really see them, but
 it's been said
they slide inside of pine cones
to warm themselves in brown seed-blankets
 while snow
is on the moss. Then,
on polished nights—
 they dance."*

"Where?"

*"Down
 under
 trees
 and onto open fields
where snow and moon mix light
to fill a waxen ballroom. . . ."*

*"But,
 do they get hungry?"*

*"Of course.
It's hearsay that they gather
 juniper and dandelion arrows
for a year of feasting—
 spring to spring.
When grass buds show, the fairies
 run to deep woods,
 find a crocus,
sit, and wait the climbing sun.
They fly, make mischief
with each other,
 and on rare occasions,
nip at children . . .
Just to prove they're
 not a thought,
 nor blot of ink,
 but
 so."*

"Oh. I see. . . ."

Carol Ann Glowacki '63

Occupational Eavesdropping

Dorothy Erpen, '65

It was eleven-thirty. I lay folded upon the couch. I lay practically in a prenatal lump . . . I dozed . . . I started . . . I gasped. I contemplated the movement of the minute hand of the clock. It was eleven-forty. I shifted my gaze inward. I groped my way around the smoky world in my eerebrum. With graspings and stretchings I hunted for some, one, measly memory to reminisce about. (I *had* to reminisce for a writing assignment.) I yawned. Eyelids heavy, I scribbled on paper the following possible topics: "The Most Remarkable Spider Web I've Ever Seen"; "My Town Has a Sewer Problem" and "How Nice and Warm My Bed Was at Eleven-Fifty."

In desperation I pulled out the stale memories of last summer. In fact, I felt so desperate I chose to be reckless. Around twelve I mumbled to my conscience, "Looks like the only thing to write about is the little things you've eavesdropped." That was base. ("Basest" is what our Latin teacher, describing Catiline, would call it.)

Unfortunately I had not been employed all summer at jobs that allowed eavesdropping. While I labeled books for a nunnery I couldn't speak and the only noise was the flick and flip of the leaves of paper while bells sliced the day into neat divisions.

But in the rest of my jobs, whisperings were both audible and cognizable. I sat at one sandwiched between two desks. One day the man behind me described an apartment house to a friend. "You ought to take a look, it's furnished, heated, the floors are covered with carpets and my wife has a washing machine. I regulate the heat and the owner pays. It's right in Boston and the rent varies from \$150 to \$195." His friend agreed and said he'd look into it. Well, that was fascinating!

In reality most eavesdroppings are of this staid tone. However, I have heard some more personal and more revealing bits. For instance, a banker replied to a railroad executive, "When you started this company we loaned you the million on our personal assurance and faith in you." The man answered, "Well, mine is the only company of its kind in the world and we are growing into Japanese and European markets, blah . . . blah . . . blah. . . ." Often eavesdroppings require attention and straining of the ears. Sometimes it comes quite easily. Once when I was working on the first floor, a man in a blue sport shirt and white pants stopped into the bank, ran down the stairs into the vaults, rushed up again straight to a teller and demanded, "Give me my money! I want my money. I have to buy a yacht. I'm going to buy a yacht and I'm going to use that money. Well, why don't you give it to me?" He hardly whispered. He shouted. He yelled the last question. The whole floor was staring.

But the focus of an eavesdropper is usually one person: a man in his office whistling *O Salutaris Hostia* as he dials a number. Then, "Bob, I got a new secretary. She's a cutie. No, she can't type. But she's wow! Prendigle won't like her. Yah, but she's eute."

Sometimes, of course, the very ponderousness of the eavesdropped words weights the listener. None of Catiline's rabble felt baser than the author when she heard an old man question a young man, "Hey, did you fight in the last war?" "Yah, in Korea," he answered. They walked away silent.

You'd be surprised how wide awake I was when the clock chimed one.



The Centaur. John Updike. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1963.

This latest novel by John Updike (author of *Rabbit, Run*), is, considered on one level, the retelling of the myth of Chiron—the wisest and noblest of the centaurs who gave up his immortality on behalf of Prometheus. It is also the story of Mr. Caldwell, a general science teacher at Olinger High, told sometimes in retrospect by Caldwell's fifteen-year-old son Peter, and sometimes in the present from Caldwell's point of view. A third level is produced by the mingling of these two. Caldwell becomes Chiron, Peter becomes Prometheus and Olinger High, Mt. Olympus. This intermingling of mythology and reality effects two things for Updike—the revitalizing of the myth and the immortalizing of Caldwell in the eyes of his son.

The actual happenings themselves could seem rather pedestrian on either level. Caldwell (Chiron) is caught between an uninterested class (various gods and goddesses), and an all-powerful principal (Zeus). He has trouble with his old Buick (?) and is tempted by Vera (Venus), a physical education teacher. Peter (Prometheus), experiences ambivalent feelings toward his father (Caldwell), and engages in adolescent love play with Penny (?).

The myth, as Updike portrays it, is inconsistent. He explains, "Not all the characters have a stable referent; Diefendorf, for example, is now a centaur, now a merman and sometimes even Hercules." This inconsistency

is not only confusing but also distracting. Finally, the reader just succumbs to Updike's brilliant prose. It no longer matters that Caldwell alternately walks and prances, with no hint of a changed status or role, because all the aspects taken together result in an absorbing experience which makes the literal meaning irrelevant in contrast to the entire effect of his third dimension. This dimension is not the myth revitalized nor is it the story of Caldwell. It is the awareness by the author and the reader that myths originate in reality and that the basic realities of the ancients and the moderns are intrinsically the same. The achievement of this dimension is due primarily to Updike's excellent (though at times obviously studied) craftsmanship.

Each of the chapters is in itself, a whole (two have been previously published as short stories). It is the juxtaposition of chapters, the mingling of mythology and reality which produces the novel's third level. Updike has an individual prose style. His descriptions are highly particularized yet have a universal quality. As Peter remembers an evening, "... I used to feel that I was trailing behind me in the bluish evening air a faint brownish trail, a flavor of oysters that made the trees and houses of the pike subaqueous. ..." He pictures the hotel clerk as, "... a hunchback with papery skin and hands warped and made lump-knuckled by arthritis, (who) put down his copy of *Collier's* and listened, crinkle head cocked. ..."

As in these brief passages, the poet in Updike is obvious in the language throughout

the novel. It is not a perfect book—the language is often too studied, the action often too obscure, yet Updike's poetic synthesizing faculty is also apparent as the story portrays the myth inherent in reality—the mythical dimension not superimposed but elicited from the reality.

Margaret Gudejko, '63

Four Playwrights and a Postscript. David L. Grossvogel. New York: Cornell University Press, 1962.

David Grossvogel introduces us to his intention, to examine the works and theories of four contemporary playwright blasphemers, Bertolt Brecht, Eugene Ionesco, Samuel Beckett, and Jean Genet, in an effort to relate their dramatic experiments to a "comprehensive esthetic of the theater." This synthesis was destined for the Postscript of the book. The reader has a simple task, to determine Mr. Grossvogel's point of view. Its obvious negative orientation sifts out of his introductory remarks: "The stage will never be the didactic object of Brecht, the parlor tricks of Ionesco, the silence of Beckett, the mirror game of Genet." Unfortunately, this simplified sort of dismissal characterizes the book, which might well have for its purpose to obviate the contributions of the avant-garde dramatists as merely a "part of the ceaseless redefinition of the stage," which, as such, "never create more than a brief stir."

Mr. Grossvogel's main preoccupation is with the idea that the four dramatists have eliminated man from the stage. This again seems to be an oversimplification that is insensitive to the profounder implications of contemporary dramatic experimentation. Contrary to his contention, it seems that each of the dramatists is seeking man in a very intense fashion, viz., Brecht in his *Organum for the Theater* is searching for an epic drama that will represent the human condition in our scientific age and yet still give pleasure to the spectator; Ionesco's dramatic metaphors seek to rehumanize man by showing him the degradation that a world full of objects has brought to the human soul; Beckett is "waiting for Godot," for salvation from "too long a stillness," and Genet seeks existential significance in "les fleurs du mal." The artist has

discovered a world devoid of humanity, devoid of beauty, and his drama is a witness to this horror. Yet it can be the revulsion from this confrontation that is the positive dramatic effect. It seems that Mr. Grossvogel has been taken in by the pessimism and negation that the dramatists hoped he would reject.

He admits to being concerned with the form and reasons for the "irreverence" of these *avant-garde* writers. But, in essence, the only concrete impression that is projected is that Aristotelian esthetics have been challenged, which apparently amounts to aggressive heresy, and that each of the dramatists is severely circumscribed by his efforts to replace the absolute theatrical organ prescribed by antiquity with one more functional and meaningful in our time.

Mr. Grossvogel's critical treatment of each dramatist is adequate for an introduction to the particular inspiration of each although, again, the simplification of the problems of Brecht and Genet as technical and those of Beckett and Ionesco as metaphysical does not do justice to the total artistic process handled by each one of them. There seems to be little room for quarrel with the factual assertions made by the critic regarding the theories or the works of the writers but his judgments, following from the selected facts presented, are challengeable. That Brecht uses the stage as "a forum for barter and the testing of ideas," or that Ionesco is "fighting a losing battle against the human sympathy of the stage" seem inadequate explanations for the influence and controversy that their dramas have effected. The one unity Mr. Grossvogel has discovered in the efforts of the four dramatists is their aggressive castigation of the stage and this "with contempt and little logic." What of Brecht's workable, though imperfect, "alienation" theory that would retheatricalize the theatre, reopening its channels of communication by eliminating the conditioning mechanisms that have deadened drama as a vital social institution? What of Ionesco's *Chairs* that confronts man with a world of smothering "things," a world that he has made for himself and that promises to destroy him? It must be more than aggression that makes the vibrations of these dramatists sing the same tortured, searching melody.

Mr. Grossvogel's discussion of Jean Genet is a positive critical contribution. He has succeeded in meaningfully relating Genet's pe-

culiar personal ethic to his esthetic of the theater, in describing Genet's fascination with the flavor of evil as he implements it as a source of dramatic metaphor.

Although *Four Playwrights and a Post-script* has not the tolerance nor the perception that searching, transition-torn drama requires of a critic, it is in itself a testimony to the dilemma of the artist who is faced with the often inhibiting responsibility of communication on the one hand and the problem of finding a form that will represent his vision in a dramatic context. If it does nothing else this book witnesses many of these problems.

Mary F. Courtney, '63

Morte D'Urban. J. F. Powers. New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1962.

J. F. Powers' *Morte D'Urban* presents several paradoxes to the reader. One is that Urban, the hero, is still alive at the end of the book, despite its title. Another is that while the implications of the action interact remarkably at one or two removes of meaning-level, the action itself is trivial: the book is an insignificant novel but an exciting satire. The problem of interpretation perhaps inevitably overshadows any satire written in an age so profoundly pluralistic as ours.

Father Urban Roche is a "priest-promoter." His priesthood does not direct and inform his life; rather it serves as a status ticket, an easy way to affluence. People are glad to offer painless tribute to heaven by loaning heaven's priest their car, their yacht, their credit card at the exclusive restaurant. Urban is glad to cooperate with the grace of man. Urban is not precisely a mediocre priest; he is a popular retreat preacher, a sought-after banquet speaker, quick with the *bon mot*, the *beau geste*. He is such a vigorous and enterprising promoter that he is hardly a priest at all.

Given the great body of which Urban is one member, the priest seems a blossoming Lancelot. The Order of St. Clement (founded by J. F. Powers) abounds in some of the most irretrievable atrocities that pen has sketched into habits. The Clementines are as far from any Christian ideal as pigeons from eagles. They trip their corridors and salt their eggs in apparent obliviousness to whether "living, we live in Christ." They seem never to have

gotten within earshot of Paul's "whether you eat or drink, or do anything else, do all for the glory of God"; "do you not know that you are the temple of God, and that the spirit of God dwells in you?"

In view of his Order, and in view of the inter-order feuding and the diocesan factionousness and competition for episcopal favor, Father Urban seems almost as valuable as he thinks he is. He is a peerless promoter. He lives up to the adolescent exhortations, "Be a winner! Never say die!" But to really enter into the priesthood that he plays as a role, the promoter must attend to other instructions: "Be ye perfect. . . ," and "Unless a man be born again of water and the spirit. . . "; "whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it. . . ." This must be the death of Urban, the death of rebirth.

In J. F. Powers' novel, we see the Church succumbing to sleeping sickness. Her loyal son, Urban, tries all the wrong remedies, (e.g., he engineers a golf course of the Order of St. Clement—to attract retreatants). With profound, but not deep enough appreciation of the irony of the situation, Father Urban recalls a news evaluation: with respect to business efficiency, among international organizations, the Roman Catholic Church is "second only to Standard Oil."

No one would write or read a novel wholly comprised of the pathetic blunderings of misguided shadows of characters. The interplay of incidents and ideals, the farcical re-enactment of symbolic, noble gestures, the abuse of meaningful props, the comic counterpoint of what's supposed to be with the discrepant, deplorable actuality—all this is the satire. The straight face of the narrative mask tells the story as blandly as Urban enacts it. If sometimes it seems that someone behind the mask chuckles, or coughs discreetly, shall we assume such things to be innuendo or imagination?

To read the novel for the story or characters is futile. Anyone seeking a brilliant satire on the tragedy of our triviality, any student of the art of re-creating reality in fiction, anyone wearing the collar or the veil and struggling to preserve his dedication to one master—any of these will find in *Morte D'Urban* humor, art, insight, relevance, delight.

The book's title indicates Mr. Powers' utilization of Sir Thomas Malory's *Morte D'Arthur* for allegory and symbol. Father Urban

plays a peculiar Lancelot. His adventures are trivial, embarrassing and ludicrous; his chivalry is misconceived and inappropriate. He spends his last years as a priest rather than as a promoter, but his change of heart results from a cerebral collision with a golf ball. It seems as much loss of mind as change of heart. Mr. Powers sets only this meagre *imprimatur* on his hero's last years: ". . . without

wishing to, he gained a reputation for piety he hadn't had before, which, however, was not entirely unwarranted now." *Morte D'Arthur* is a sort of swan song of chivalry. Its Lancelot is responsible for the fall of his king and of the chivalric ideal. The reader, seeing himself in Urban, wonders how far the analogy applies.

Kathleen Marotta, '64

On Roualt's "Three Clowns"

They are a trinity of loneliness:
united in despair, detached in isolation;
seared by smoldering willows,
scored in charred ferns.
Their voices sang another's dream,
laughed another's joy:
How long can you pretend
to have what you have not?
Each costume shimmers dim,
Each brushed-in smile grins on misshapen:
a three-faced Judas stiffens, leers, wails . . .
triple desolation.
How long can you live on
with cindered souls?

Winifred Welch, '64

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